

## **Intro**

When you have something good you don't look elsewhere.

When you find a good restaurant, you keep going back. When you find a good car, you might stick with the same model. Or at least the same company. When you find a good hair dresser, you keep going back.

Why do you keep going back? Because you're satisfied with them. You're confident they'll deliver what you're expecting.

Paul says you have everything you need in Christ. So don't look elsewhere. When we're confident in Jesus, we won't look elsewhere.

## **READ PASSAGE (2:6-15)**

## **PRAY**

### **Body**

#### **Passage Focus**

- 1) You don't stop at the foundation. You keep building. And you keep building in the way that you began: faith, repentance, humility.
- 2) You possess fullness in Christ. You don't need other lords or philosophies or manmade practices to be complete. Jesus and Jesus alone is sufficient.
- 3) Colossians is all about moving towards completeness by continuing in Christ alone.

#### **Theme: continue by confidence**

#### **Point 1: Continue by confidence in the new birth (2:11-13)**

##### **Fullness**

In 2:10, we learned that Christians *"have been filled in him."*

In other words, the salvation that we receive in Jesus is sufficient for our spiritual well-being. We don't need to look elsewhere. Paul continues that thought in 2:11.

2:11-13 is about regeneration, newness of life, the new birth, being born again, rivers of living water flowing from our heart.

*In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands,*

*"In him"* = in Christ. Paul is describing what's happened for Christians.

In the Old Covenant, male children were circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, a sign of God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:9-14; Lev 12:3).

*"made without hands"* signals a different sort of circumcision. Not physical. Not the cutting of flesh.

*by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,*

Christ's circumcision involves removal of the flesh. Jesus performs it.

But how can our flesh be removed without physical circumcision? What does Jesus take away?

*having been buried with him in baptism,*

In 2:12, Paul continues his argument by relating circumcision to baptism. Our circumcision took place at our baptism. When circumcised, we died with Jesus.

*in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.*

At circumcision, at baptism, we were raised with Jesus by the Father. How were we raised? Through faith. As the Father raised the Son from the dead, likewise, the Father raised us from the dead through faith.

*And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him,*

Paul describes what we were before being raised with Christ. Dead in our trespasses. Uncircumcised. Without spiritual life. In this state God made us alive.

### **So what is circumcision?**

In Romans 2:29, Paul said that "*circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.*"

In other words, the Spirit circumcises the heart.

We see spiritual, heart circumcision in the Old Covenant.

*Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.* – Deuteronomy 10:16

To be circumcised means to be born of the Spirit. To have a heart tender to God's commands. This comes only through the new birth.

### **Does baptism give us faith and the new birth?**

Paul makes it sound like baptism gives us faith and the new birth. *having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God,* That sounds a lot like baptism produces heart circumcision = the new birth and faith. If you were having a gospel conversation with an informed Roman Catholic they would use this as a proof text for why salvation is conferred at baptism.

I've been to a lot of Roman Catholic funerals. Usually I hear something like this: **because they've been baptized, we know they are with God.** My wife asks me, where do they get this in the Bible? Colossians 2:12 is her answer.

Are Catholics on the right track? If not, what is Paul saying? Why does Paul connect faith and the new birth to baptism?

Because they're all intimately connected in the salvation experience. Without faith there's no baptism. Without the new birth there's no baptism. If baptized, there's faith and the new birth.

In the New Testament logic, there's no such thing as a person with faith who's unbaptized. There's no such thing as a born again person who isn't baptized. And there's no such thing as a baptized person doesn't believe and isn't born of the Spirit. That's Paul's logic. They all go together. If one of the three occurs (faith, new birth, baptism), Paul assumes that all three occurred.

They're a package deal. They don't come separately.

### **Paul speaks of baptism in terms of what it pictures. Dying to sin. Rising to newness of life.**

In the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20), Jesus' order is make disciples (bring them to faith by proclaiming the gospel) → baptize them → instruct them (bring them to maturity, completeness).

That's baptism after faith. Not baptism creates faith.

### **Circumcision today?**

Should Christians be circumcised? No. Why? First, because we're not under the Old Covenant. We're under the New Covenant. Second, physical circumcision was a temporary picture pointing to a greater reality: heart circumcision. We need heart circumcision, not physical circumcision.

### **Deuteronomy 30:6**

Deuteronomy 30:6 speaks to the effects of heart circumcision:

*And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.*

"*the powerful working of God*" Paul speaks of is replacing deadness with life. Replacing stubbornness with love for God's commands. This is what we need. We need God to work inside us so that we desire what we should desire.

### **Continue by confidence in the new birth**

My first point is **continue by confidence in the new birth**. Paul is revealing these things so that we won't be tempted to follow after false worldviews that conflict with Christ. We have everything we need in Christ. Why would we look elsewhere? Why would we listen to other voices? What I'm saying is knowing what we have in Jesus gives us confidence in Jesus and his gospel.

If we know what we have in the new birth, we won't look for spiritual help outside of Jesus.

### **What's great about the new birth?**

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. – Galatians 5:22-24*

I just want to highlight three: love, patience, self-control.

### **Love**

Love being an affectionate devotion to someone that expresses itself in tangible action. Having the Spirit enables us to love difficult people. I can bear with. I can care. I can be hopeful. I can be kind. Having the

Spirit enables us to love people that aren't just like us. We're not limited to friendships with people just like me.

Jesus changes us to bless our human relationships.

### **Patience**

Patience speaks to emotional calmness or tranquility during unfavorable circumstances.

The Spirit frees us from despair. The Spirit puts strength in our stride to keep going. Despite the hurdles. Peace that surpasses all understanding.

Jesus changes us by giving us internal strength to be at peace, despite our circumstances. This isn't natural. This is supernatural.

### **Self-control**

Self-control speaks to having control over our emotions, impulses, desires, and actions. Command over oneself.

Part of this is changing our passions and desires (Gal 5:24). Think self-control in matters like use of the tongue. Keeping us from the self-inflicted consequences of destructive words. Matters like substance abuse. In Jesus there is power to overcome addiction. God changes human desires by his Spirit. Causing us to want what we didn't want before. Causing us to no longer desire what we previously longed for. The Spirit reshapes our desires so that we want what is right and helpful rather than what is wrong and harmful.

Self-control means freedom from the rule of destructive desires. Heart circumcision = the removal, the cutting off of destructive desires. This is the hope of the new birth.

We shouldn't limit the gospel to rescue from the penalty of sin. We also need to highlight rescue from the power of sin. Today. In this life.

Be confident in these things!

### **Jesus is sufficient**

In Jesus alone heart change possible. In Christ, God fundamentally changes who we are on the inside. Why would we look elsewhere? We can't fix ourselves. But God can. Why would we look to manmade remedies that don't change the heart?

### **Point 2: Continue by confidence in the forgiveness of sins (2:13-14)**

*And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,*

With the new birth came forgiveness of "*all our trespasses.*"

Trespass speaks to sin. Stepping outside God's moral law. Wrong steps.

If we've come to faith in Jesus, all our sins are forgiven. Past. Present. Future. Every sin we'll ever commit.

2:14 explains how Jesus released us from the punishment our sins deserve:

*by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*

Our sins against God's moral law resulted in a "*record of debt.*" Every time we sin, God takes note and records it. God is omnipresent (in every place at the same time) and omniscient (all-knowing down to knowing what we're thinking right now). God's record of our sins stands against us because of "*legal demands.*" The law demands that sin, our sin, be punished.

At the cross, Jesus did away with our "*record of debt.*" It's gone. Our "*record of debt*" no longer exists.

### **Substitution**

This speaks to substitutionary atonement. On the cross, Jesus satisfied the "*legal demands*" by dying in our place and taking the punishment we deserve. The "*record of debt*" is wiped out because the debt is paid. Kind of like someone paying your medical bills. When the bill is paid, the debt is gone.

Again, Jesus took "*all our trespasses.*" Jesus, being the sinless Son of God who became man, is a worthy substitute such that his one-time death is worthy to cover every sin we'll ever commit. That's total forgiveness.

### **What this means for us**

This means God's forgiveness is once for all and total. No further appeasement necessary. Jesus' death is sufficient to satisfy God's wrath against our sin. Jesus' death is sufficient to wipe out our record. Jesus' death is sufficient to crush our sense of guilt and shame. Jesus' death is sufficient to give us confidence that we have peace with God.

### **God forgives fully**

This is good news! God forgives fully! In a shame and cancel culture where everyone's looking to find fault and point the finger. In a shame culture where sports reporters are looking for toxic organizational cultures to expose or entertainment reporters are looking for transphobic tweets and calling for judgment, what a contrast. God is merciful. God forgives fully.

While we celebrate the overturn of Roe vs Wade because we value those created in God's image, we also hold out the hope of a cleansed conscience to those who've participated in abortion. God forgives fully. We can bring our guilt and shame to him.

So we live from confidence in the new birth. And we live from confidence in the cross. Confidence that God forgives fully. We don't live to appease God. As if there's a list of things we have to do to wipe out our record. We live from **confidence in the forgiveness of sins.**

### **Non-Christian**

How can your record of debt be wiped out? By trusting in Jesus alone and repenting of your sins. Jesus died on the cross such that whoever repents and believes will be forgiven. Turn from rebellion to faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. Experience total forgiveness.

We sang that Jesus “breaks the power of cancelled sin.” Jesus forgives. He cancels our debt. That’s forgiveness. Jesus circumcises the heart. That’s breaking the power. Live from confidence in these truths.

### **Point 3: Continue by confidence in Christ’s triumph (2:15)**

*He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

Paul continues to discuss the effects of the cross and the resurrection. “*He*” = God. “*rulers and authorities*” = angelic beings. See 1:16 where “*thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities*” are listed as invisible beings created by Jesus. The fact that Jesus disarmed them and shamed them suggests demonic forces. “*by triumphing over them in him*” = in Jesus’ death and resurrection. “*in him*” = in Christ.

The word translated “triumphing” was used for triumphal processions. Where Roman generals would parade their prisoners of war in public victory procession. Think a victory lap in auto racing. Think a Patriots Super Bowl parade. The team driving through town on floats to the applause of adoring fans. The resurrection was God’s victory lap.

### **Disarmed**

Demons disarmed. Like a police officer disarms an active shooter. In what way were demons disarmed? Their captivity of God’s people was ended at the cross and the resurrection. I think Paul is combining both events here. On the cross Jesus canceled our debt. At the resurrection, we rose to newness of life. Meaning the end of our captivity to demonic forces. Everything was accomplished for us at the cross and resurrection. Effects already accomplished. Effects that play out in time. For me, God disarmed the rulers on my behalf in 33 AD, but I experienced the new birth on May 23, 1999.

### **Application**

**Continue by confidence in Christ’s triumph.** God is victorious. The resurrection is the proof. God’s past victory lap ensures future triumph. It’s happening today in sinners being set free. Victory will be complete when Jesus returns.

God’s triumph over demonic forces tells us don’t subject ourselves to manmade, demonic religious systems. Why would we turn to manmade, defeated religious systems for spiritual help? Look to Jesus where there’s newness of life and full forgiveness.

### **Conclusion**

Live from confidence in Christ.

**Confidence in the new birth.**

**Confidence in the forgiveness of sins.**

**Confidence in Christ’s triumph.**